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AIRPORT FINANCE OPTIONS OUTLINED

The Governor's Airport Financing Committee recently made several recommendations regarding short and long-term needs for state airports. The committee, created in the 2001-03 state biennial budget, is comprised of state legislators, airport officials, private business representatives and staff from WisDOT and the Department of Commerce.

The committee's recommendations take both a near-term and long-term perspective:

- ◆ For the near term, the committee calls for the state to maintain its \$11.8 million in annual funding for airport preservation and improvement.
- ◆ In the long term, the committee calls for the transfer of \$3.4 million annually in aviation-related sales taxes to the state transportation fund for the state's airport development program.

The recommendations are based on the State Airport System Plan that calls for \$1.3 billion in federal, state and local funds through 2020 to preserve and improve the state's airport system. For a copy of the report, call WisDOT's Bureau of Aeronautics at (608) 266-3351.

AASHTO RELEASES RAIL REPORT

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) last week released two major reports addressing the national rail system. The reports identify \$60 billion in passenger investment (with a call for a dedicated federal funding program) and \$195 billion in freight investment nationwide.

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, cosponsored by Wisconsin and eight other states, is highlighted in the passenger report. Midwest Rail calls for 110 MPH service in Wisconsin and other states. The report also highlights strong ridership on Amtrak's *Hiawatha Service* between Milwaukee and Chicago.

For more information on the reports, including how to obtain copies, check AASHTO's web site at www.transportation.org.

CONGRESS TACKLES APPROPRIATIONS

The U.S. Congress continues debate on an FY 2003 transportation spending package that remains unfinished almost four months into the fiscal year.

The Senate last week considered a \$64.6 billion transportation package as part of an omnibus appropriations bill. Most transportation items are held very close to FY 2002 spending levels. The Senate version includes these key provisions:

- ◆ The Senate provides \$31.8 billion for highway program spending, compared to only \$27.7 billion in a package passed by the House.
- ◆ The Senate includes \$1.2 billion for Amtrak, compared to an initial \$762 million proposal.
- ◆ Transit programs would receive \$7.2 billion in the Senate package.
- ◆ The Aviation Improvement Program ceiling would be at \$3.4 billion in FY 2003, up slightly over the \$3.3 billion figure the previous year.

Once a Senate package is approved, the House and Senate will need to resolve differences in a conference committee. Most appropriations bill texts and committee reports are on the Internet at <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/approp/app03.html>.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb 4 - Deer-Vehicle Crash Workshop, Madison
Feb 18 - Env. Justice workshop, Milwaukee
Mar 31 / Apr 1 - Aviation conference, Middleton

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